Name of Provider: **University of Sheffield**
UKPRN: **10007157**

University of Sheffield
TEF Provider Submission, 2019

1. Made in Sheffield

The University of Sheffield has a proud history of delivering an outstanding educational experience. Receiving our Royal Charter in 1905, and funded from penny donations from everyday people across the City, we have stayed true to our roots and the underpinning belief that the highest quality teaching, delivered in an inclusive and supportive environment, can truly transform lives.

It is not just the quality of our educational experience that contributes to our students' success: our Students' Union (*voted best in the UK for ten years running*[1]); our award winning Library (*voted No.1 in the UK*[2]); our exceptional student support services; and our commitment to our staff (*a Sunday Times 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations 2018, a Stonewall Top 100 LGBT+ employer, and 94% of our staff saying that they are proud to work for the University*[3]) all wrap around to ensure that our students, whatever their background, leave the University with the skills, experience and confidence needed to succeed.

The student experience is a two-way commitment and student engagement is central to our success. The Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey 2018 ranked us in the top 5 for providing the best overall student experience and we work proactively with our student body to ensure that this remains a pillar of our outstanding offer. Our commitment to this is best demonstrated through us having one of the highest continuation rates in the sector (97.5%).

One of the Russell Group of universities, we have just under 29,000 students, studying a broad range of subjects across five faculties. Our student population for 2017/18 was made up of 19,386 undergraduates, 6,831 postgraduate taught students and 2,631 postgraduate research students; with international students making up a quarter of our community.

As a research-led, research intensive university, pushing boundaries of new knowledge is what we do. We continue to integrate discoveries, innovation and new methods into the design and delivery of programmes ensuring they remain relevant and rich in content. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework, 99% of our research was assessed as world leading, internationally excellent or internationally recognised and we are in the top 10 in the Russell Group for research output. This, and the investment in research infrastructure, means that students are immersed in an intensive research environment and learn at the edge of knowledge creation and discovery.

Since 1905, the University of Sheffield has grown in strength to being 75th in the world in the QS World University rankings. Our students are drawn from 149 countries; and all our students contribute to the richness of our educational experience and help us to internationalise our curriculum. In 2013, Sheffield launched the #WeAreInternational campaign; a pioneering campaign now supported by 160 universities globally, all recognising the immense contribution international students make to academic life. We are one of the Top 50 Most International Universities in the World.[4]

Whilst drawing some of the best students from across the world, we believe strongly that all students with the desire and capability to succeed should be able to do so. 8.9% of our students are from Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) backgrounds; the fourth highest in the Russell Group. We are also fourth in terms of recruiting students from state schools, but critically our attainment data show these students performing better than private school students as they

[1] Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey
[2] Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey, 2017
[3] TUOS Staff Survey, 2016
[4] Times Higher Education World University Rankings, 2018

progress with us. The outcomes for our Widening Participation (WP) students are regularly at or above benchmark in the splits and we remain committed to supporting this group into, through and beyond higher education.

Our students also contribute enormously to the social, cultural and economic tapestry of the City and region. Sheffield City Region (SCR) is largely SME based and we work actively to support business innovation, with a focus on undertaking high quality research and innovation with local companies. In 2016/17 the University was one of the top two UK universities in terms of number of SMEs engaged and value of related research undertaken[5]. We work with City partners to help them attract and employ graduates and have a vibrant community of student volunteers. Through events such as the *Festival of the Mind* and *Off the Shelf* (the latter with Sheffield Hallam University), which together engage over 100,000 local people each year, we are active in promoting and sharing the value of what we do.

This submission evidences the consistently high quality teaching, exemplary student experience and successful student outcomes we provide. It demonstrates how the University meets the descriptor of 'Outstanding' and that our provision is of the highest quality in the UK. We have based our commentary on the core, split and supplementary metrics and complementary evidence, with examples of how we are achieving excellence; following a golden thread from the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy through to the individual experience of each of our students.

2. Performance against core metrics

The section below provides a short narrative response to the core metrics, which is then developed and contextualised against the broader TEF criteria in Section 3.

2.1 Teaching on my Course

The metrics show a solid performance of 86.1% with no statistically significant deviations from benchmark across all split metrics. While not necessarily causal, year 2 (where we do not have reportable data) and year 3 of the metrics coincide with an NSS boycott by the student body. We therefore continue to draw on similar, national and international student experience measures (such as our position in the top five of the THE Student Experience Survey[6] for the eighth year running and being ranked 11th in Europe in the THE Europe Teaching Rankings 2018) to complement our assessment of students' satisfaction with teaching. These external measures, alongside internal student evaluation and robust quality processes, give further assurance of teaching quality, details of which are given below.

2.2 Assessment & Feedback

Split metrics demonstrate areas of strength, in particular for students studying at the UG:PG boundary (26% of the population for the measure) where NSS data are significantly above benchmark with a double positive flag. However the score of 69% against a benchmark of 70.8% means that assessment and feedback is an area we are prioritising. Improving performance remains an institutional priority and through our innovative Programme Level Approach (see below) we are making significant strides to achieve this.

2.3 Academic Support

Academic Support is a pillar of our offer to students and a strong performance of 81.1% above the benchmark of 80.6% supports this commitment. Students studying courses at the UG:PG

[5] The Higher Education Business and Community Interaction (HEBCI) Survey
[6] This surveys students on: high-quality staff/lectures; helpful/interested staff; well-structured courses; good personal relationship with teaching staff; tuition in small groups; fair workload

boundary again show a double positive flag in the data. How we are achieving positive outcomes for Academic Support is explored in detail in Section 3 below.

2.4 Continuation

The University is in the top 10% in terms of absolute performance and comfortably above benchmark with a confident continuation score of 97.5% (z-score >3). Critically, and particularly with our strong commitment to WP, this success is replicated across our student community with all deviations from the mean across splits being positive. Section 3 provides further depth as to how we are both achieving and maintaining these results, and critically helping our students to complete their studies in higher education.

2.5 Employment or Further Study

Again above benchmark, at 94.9% our commitment to student success is born out by the high numbers moving into employment or further study.

2.6 Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study

With a positive flag, 82.4% of our graduates progress into highly skilled employment or further study. Exceptionally, this performance extends across splits, with some of our strongest performance against benchmark being from our mature, BME and disabled students, all of whom have indicators above benchmark at the 3 standard deviation and three percentage point level. This demonstrates strongly our commitment to the Sheffield Graduate and the outcomes that all our students can achieve through the quality of our offer.

2.7 (Supplementary Metric) LEO Data

The University of Sheffield achieves comfortably above benchmark for '*Sustained employment or further study'* and '*Above median earnings threshold or further study;'* with the latter placing us in the top 10% for absolute performance.

2.8 (Supplementary Metric) Grade Inflation

Whilst grade inflation across the sector remains a subject of much debate we have confidence in the degree qualifications we award and the rigour afforded these decisions. Growth of 9% in the number of firsts (currently 23% against a sector average of 26%) and 2:1s (54% against a sector average of 49%)[7] over the eight years covered by the TEF metrics has been gradual and is carefully tracked to assure quality.

2.9 Minority Mode

With 96% of students covered by the TEF metrics studying on a full-time basis, this submission focuses on majority mode. In minority mode (4%) we remain above benchmark for all metrics except continuation and employment or further study, although in relation to the latter we outperform benchmark for numbers going into highly skilled employment or further study (86%).

A high percentage of our students in minority mode are female and mature, with the majority studying on nursing programmes or through our Department for Lifelong Learning (DLL). Having reviewed these cohorts, we are comfortable that the flags reflect the nature of work they are in/entering and wider drivers for study, rather than poor student outcomes. Due to the small percentage of students in part-time mode, we have not provided a detailed analysis of these outcomes, but refer to them in the narrative to evidence how we ensure that all students receive the same support and opportunities irrespective of mode or level of study.

[7] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/11-01-2018/sfr247-higher-education-student-statistics/qualifications

3. The Sheffield Graduate

3.1 Teaching Quality

The *Our Education and Student Experience* section of the University's Strategic Plan brings to the fore our ambition to offer the highest quality education and student experience. By doing so, we continue to enhance our reputation as an inspiring, engaged, research-led institution committed to supporting the development of our staff and students; underpinned by our commitment to ethically responsible education for all and our civic values.

Our journey to realising this ambition is brought to life in the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2016-2021[8]. Focusing around three key themes: *Excellence in Practice*; an *Outward Facing Ethos*; and *Developing a Flexible Approach*, we are driving innovation by exploring new ways of teaching, enhancing the spaces in which learning takes place, and maximising the effectiveness of the technologies we employ. We deliver teaching that inspires and actively engages students in an inclusive, research intensive environment, and we are preparing students for the world beyond the University through authentic learning that forges connections with communities and external partners.

We are realising our ambitions through a whole programme approach to learning and teaching with the implementation of our Programme Level Approach (PLA), which is being driven out across all disciplines and is one of the University's five institutional level Strategic Change Projects. PLA centres everything we do around how the students experience their academic study: refocusing academic endeavour away from 'my module' to 'our programme' and embedding Sheffield Graduate Attributes within Learning Outcomes in terms of programme design, delivery and review. It is the route through which we are reviewing the appropriateness, effectiveness, volume and distribution of assessment for each programme as a whole and reinforcing the Student Voice at the heart of all these activities. PLA is not just a process; it is delivering the cultural change that will ensure our on-going position as an outstanding provider.

PLA was piloted in 5 departments in 2016/17 and we are on target for all our undergraduate programmes to have transitioned to a Programme Level Approach by 2021. We are already seeing demonstrable impact for early adopters of PLA; for example the departments of Psychology, Biomedical Science, Architecture, Urban Studies & Planning, and Medicine have delivered increases in their NSS Assessment and Feedback scores of 23, 18, 9 and 5 percentage points respectively since 2016. Psychology also achieved the highest increase in overall satisfaction realising a 15 percentage point jump, from 71% to 86% over the same period, and this success is born out in student feedback.

> "*Communication to us is excellent. We receive information on how feedback has been used to improve the course, any change in teaching is communicated quickly and answers to questions are always in a timely fashion." "The Department of Psychology always takes student voices into consideration and acts appropriately."* (Final year students, 2017/18).

Student Engagement

Our programmes are designed to stimulate, challenge and empower students within and beyond their discipline, and to ensure they develop the skills, confidence and competencies that will support them in the transition to graduate employment, higher study, and throughout their adult lives. Our programmes stretch students intellectually, but within an inclusive and supportive environment with committed academic teams, outstanding services and an engaged community.

We place equal value on students' physical and mental wellbeing as we do on their academic outcomes. We understand the importance of this because our students tell us it matters, and with

[8] Shortlisted for Best Learning and Teaching Strategy 2017, THE Awards

one of the best continuation rates in the country (97.5%) and our students' success in moving into highly skilled employment or further study (82%) we know our approach has delivered outstanding outcomes. In the NSS 2018 we ranked 2nd in the Russell Group[9] for Student Voice (*Q23-26: I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course; Staff value students' views and opinions about the course; It is clear how students' feedback has been acted upon; and the students' union (association of guild) effectively represents students' academic interests*). For the last question, our Students' Union was ranked first among the Russell Group and 20 percentage points above the mean for the group.

Supporting Statement from Sheffield Students' Union:

Sheffield Students' Union is proud of its constructive and longstanding positive relationship with the University at all levels. The support our University has provided along with their commitment to supporting the student experience has allowed our SU to be ranked as the number one SU in the country for 10 years and as the leading SU in the Russell Group under the NSS Q26.

The University is committed to listening to the views of students and elected SU Officers across the breadth of its provision and on issues both inside and outside of the classroom. The project to fundamentally review academic representation in the 2017/18 academic year was conducted in partnership and is now being delivered in partnership. It is innovative, effective and provides almost 1,000 students the opportunity to improve the experience on their programme and develop their skills.

We are committed to working with the University to continue to improve the student experience and students are involved in the development of the PLA and improving the delivery of assessment and feedback. The SU has identified the inclusion of sustainability within the curriculum and decolonising the curriculum as strategic priorities and we are pleased with the University's response to our proposals and excited to see how these are practically applied through PLA.

The recent developments in provision for students facing mental health difficulties have delivered improved and joined up services with reduced waiting times. The SU was involved in the design and development of these services and we continue to work in partnership to improve the student support provision for students.

We continue to work with the University on further student priorities and we hope that progress will be made in relation to the introduction of a contextual admissions policy in the near future. We have been involved in the development of the University's new BAME strategy and are pleased with the strategic attention that this has received, we hope that this will soon result in impactful actions across the institution, that reduce our BME attainment gap. Finally, we also hope that the University will consider including a student representative on the Senior Remuneration Committee, the only senior committee in the University without a student voice.

Our approach to student representation on academic programmes was completely reviewed and redesigned in partnership with the Students' Union during 2017, with a view to increasing the student voice across the campus. Students, including those who are often under-represented such as mature, distance learning and international students, and staff from across the University were involved in the initial consultation. So far this academic session, and following implementation of recommendations to improve the recruitment, role profile, and training of academic representatives, 934 students have been trained (compared to 450 in 2017-18), with 93% of them reporting positive benefits from the training. We have also seen an increase in the proportion of

[9] Excludes the two institutions that did not reach the percentage threshold for responses

mature (from 11% to 22%) and international (from 20% to 41%) students trained as reps. It is too soon to measure the full impact of these changes, but early indicators suggests that students are more invested in the role and feel more confident about their ability to shape and partner in learning and teaching developments.

Student engagement is a central pillar of PLA, with one of the priority areas of focus for this year being for programme teams to work with their students to deepen their understanding of how the development, delivery and management of assessment and feedback informs the students' experience. Our priority is to ensure that engagement is authentic, progressive and challenging and not solely focused around the traditional staff student committee model. We are using it to do innovative things, for example students in the School of Law have co-produced, with academic and professional services staff, the Skills and Values spine which forms a core of all undergraduate law degrees. Similarly, students in the Department of Education provide annual feedback to staff on their teaching delivery through a supported process. Engagements such as these not only help us develop our programmes, they allow students additional opportunities to develop transferable skills and lead to a richer learning experience.

Our Students' Union have been involved in producing this submission; they are represented on major university committees and working groups; they participate actively in our annual Learning and Teaching Conference (including leading sessions); and are routinely on panels for senior appointments. Students have been on the panels for all nine of the University Executive level roles appointed to since 2015. The Students' Union sits at the heart of our Campus and the Student Unions' Student Advice Centre (SAC) works in an integrated way with our Student Support Services, ensuring a complementary approach to information, advice and guidance. The Students' Union co-developed the *University's Student Mental Health Strategy 2016-20,* which takes a whole institution approach to promoting positive mental health, and Sheffield Access to Mental Health Support (SAMHS), described below.

We are the only UK university with accreditation from the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the British Psychological Society for our Counselling Service and Mental Health Service. We offer a single point of access for students to receive a consultation with a mental health professional (SAMHS) and short waiting times mean that students are assured of fast, professional mental health assessment. Our mental health service is also distinctive in being closely linked to the NHS enabling direct referral of students into NHS IAPT services (without the need for a GP referral) shortening the pathway to care.

The University Health Service (one of only two UK university-run GP practices) in the heart of the campus is a bespoke student practice enabling us to offer student-only clinics on topics like asthma education, sexual health and diabetes management. Our Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS) offers on-going support to students with long-term mental health conditions and the Support Worker Service in DDS offers mentors and support to students with Specific Learning Difficulties. This team received a score of 97.99% in a 2018 audit by the DfE DSA-Quality Assurance Group.

In 2017 we introduced Encore Lecture Capture in response to student demand. Encore is now operating effectively across the University and details can be found in Section 3.2 below.

Valuing Teaching

Teaching matters at Sheffield. With *Excellence in Practice* as one of the three major themes in our Learning & Teaching Strategy we are driving to deliver *'high quality teaching that inspires and actively engages students in an inclusive research intensive environment.'*

We know that teaching is not just about what a teacher does at the front of the classroom, it is part of what happens across the academic community; communities that build on practice based around the concepts of co-production, collegiality, cohesion, accessibility and support. Realising excellent teaching and genuine student engagement is dependent on having motivated, engaged

and committed academic staff, who are developed and supported to be the best teachers they can be. We recognise the value of teaching via our Academic Career Pathways, ensuring that teaching is not only valued by academic staff, but is a progression pathway in its own right.

Under the banner of 'Elevate,' the University's Academic Practice and Skills Development (APSD) team draw together teaching focused programmes, events, workshops and development opportunities for academic and other staff. They operate the University's Learning and Teaching Professional Recognition Scheme (LTPRS), aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education, which helps staff to secure HEA fellowship. Within this framework the team deliver our PgCertTLHE. This 30 credit programme is HEA accredited and enables new academic staff to achieve Fellowship of the HEA, which forms part of their probationary requirements. To date 574 staff have completed this programme. As at 2017/18, 1151 (35.2%) of our staff were HEA accredited, comparing favourably with a Russell Group average of 30%. We are also proud to host nine colleagues who are currently HEA Principal Fellows and nine National Teaching Fellows. 82% of our staff[10] hold doctorates and 54%[11] hold teaching qualifications and/or are HEA accredited.

The APDS team also delivers Sheffield Teaching Assistant Workshops for staff who have, or are likely to have, teaching responsibilities during their time at the University, for example technical staff, postgraduate researchers. For those staff who want to develop their practice in teaching and learning further the University offers a MEd in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

Teaching excellence is celebrated through our Senate Teaching Awards. Introduced in 2001/02, these awards recognise the achievements of c.10-15 staff each year who have made outstanding contributions across the categories of *Sustained Excellence*, *Early Career*, *Collaborative Activities,* or *Leadership*. The awards are presented in graduation ceremonies recognising their importance and the value and status they are afforded within the University. Our Students' Union also run the annual *SU Academic Awards* where students are able to vote for those academic staff and academic teams that have made an outstanding contribution to the student experience.

Each year the University hosts a Learning and Teaching Conference showcasing good practice, pedagogic developments and innovations across all our disciplines. We also run 'TELFest,' a staff facing event that takes place over 4 days promoting best practice in the use of learning technologies in teaching. These have run since 2007 and 2014 respectively, and between them engage over 750 staff and students from across the University each year. Feedback from participants consistently highlights the value that staff place on the opportunities these events bring, with over 90% of staff responding positively to post-event evaluation.

Rigour & Stretch

To achieve teaching excellence and outstanding student outcomes, University of Sheffield degrees are designed in a way that encourages all students to stretch themselves to achieve and to be the best that they can be. Students are supported to be self-directed learners. Our programmes inspire them, challenge them, develop their curiosity, and encourage them to take greater ownership of their learning, all of which prepares them for success in life beyond their studies. 87% of our students stated their *'course is intellectually stimulating'* (Q4 of the NSS) and 80% said their *'course [had] challenged [them] to achieve [their] best work' (Q3)*.

Our programmes are designed to ensure that our curriculum is rich, flexible and informed by the latest research and that our students are developing and building the skills enshrined in our Sheffield Graduate Attributes (SGAs). As a research led institution, with 3,374 academic staff and a research portfolio of £150m, the opportunities for students to develop are immense and our support networks work together to ensure that whatever a student's background, or their reasons

[10] Based on highest qualification for Academic Teaching & Research/Teaching only staff, Grade 7 to Professorial.
[11] Based on Primary Teaching Qualification for Academic Teaching & Research/Teaching only staff, excludes 164 staff where data of qualification/no qualification has not been provided.

for studying with us, they are positioned to achieve. Research and teaching are interwoven and (as explored in Section 3.2) students not only benefit from the research around them, but become co-creators in new knowledge and supporting the University's academic outputs.

Our programmes are developed with partners in industry and practice; which works to ensure the on-going relevance of what we teach as well as building the strong relationships we have with employers. For example, the School of Medicine's Social Accountability Initiative enables all third year students to spend four weeks working with a charity, organisation or support service in the local area on an issue identified by the organisation. Not only does this inspire students to become accountable healthcare professionals, it also allows community partners to influence the mind set of the next generation of healthcare professionals.

University of Sheffield undergraduate programmes are accredited by 43 Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). The core metrics for student outcomes reinforce the success and relevance of programmes; and our robust quality assurance frameworks and annual review of programmes ensure that our high standards are maintained. Feedback from PSRBs also helps us to identify and share good practice.

> *"The Team noted the impressive level of self-learning facilitated by the laboratories and the sophisticated equipment available for use of 4th Year students. There is a clear relationship between the research undertaken in the laboratories and undergraduate teaching." (Joint Board of Moderators, Civil and Structural Engineering)*

We recognise that our students are entering a global market and offer all our students the option to study one of 19 languages through our Languages for All programme; either as an accredited part of their curriculum or fee-free alongside their course of study. Since 2012 the scheme has doubled in size, with 565 students now electing to study a language via this optional route. These programmes build confidence, raise awareness of different cultures, and enhance our graduates' capital in the job market - as well as just being a great thing to do.

Our learning goes beyond the core curriculum. Students across all our faculties have access to interdisciplinary offerings designed to help them to achieve beyond a core discipline. For example, the Global Engineering Challenge brings together students from different departments to work on 21st century Engineering Challenges. Students work for a week with academics, employers and a Graduate Teaching Assistant on a project to solve a real world problem; helping them to develop teamwork, design, problem-solving, and communication skills as well as raising their global awareness and technical knowledge.

Assessment & Feedback

Assessment and feedback is a priority area for the University. There are areas where we do well in terms of student satisfaction scores, such as those demonstrated in the metrics where we have a double positive for the 1,569 students studying at UG:PG boundary, and subjects such as Medicine, Dentistry, Chemical, Process & Energy Engineering, Music and Chemistry where we are getting scores that are significantly above the sector average. We are using good practice in these areas to drive improvement across departments.

Through our Learning and Teaching Strategy, change has, and is, being managed via a two-stage process: a) an initial focus on the timeliness of feedback (Q10) and the detail/helpfulness of comments (Q11), which is now delivering increased student satisfaction for both these measures, and b) an in-depth review of assessment for each programme of study to reflect on the appropriateness, diversity and balance of assessment across the year, with students being engaged in this process locally to ensure that changes support the ways in which they experience assessment at subject level. This major piece of work (being delivered via PLA) will complete this academic session with changes following in 2019/20. Pilot departments have shown a step change

in student satisfaction both via the NSS and internal student evaluation and are being used to promote best practice.

We have a policy of a 15-day turnaround for feedback, are increasing the use of on-line marking, and delivering workshops and support for staff involved in assessment. 42% of assessments submitted on-line during 2017/18 received feedback on-line and this is growing as departments respond to students' preferences for feedback to be given this way. The annual Learning and Teaching Conference this year focused solely on assessment and feedback and departments are sharing learning and good practice on a pan-institutional scale. Feedback from external examiners is also reinforcing the effectiveness of our strategy and investments to date.

> *"I was particularly impressed with the assessment sheets used for pieces of work with multiple assessors which clearly laid out the expectations in different areas at different mark levels, both giving confidence in the assessment outcome and giving students feedback on what would be needed to achieve a higher grade." (External Examiner, Department of Civil Engineering)*

Application of this learning, targeted interventions, and the foregrounding of good assessment and feedback via PLA are strengthening what we do. We are also investing in a new student record system that will improve the way we track assessments across programmes and increase our ability to interrogate the relationships between assessment practices and student experience.

3.2 Learning Environment

Resources

The University's Estates Strategy, 2016-21 is a critical enabler in delivering our academic ambitions. Since 2015 we have invested £165.3m in projects to support improvements to the physical spaces for teaching and learning across the campus. One of the largest investments in the last three years has been the £81m Diamond Building. The building provides 19,500 sqm of some of the world's most innovative student-facing facilities. Open 24/7 the Diamond offers a unique range of general and specialist teaching spaces, student laboratory spaces, and social space for 5,000 students. It offers 969 student-led learning spaces, access to 411 computers, and innovation areas such as the i-Forge, a student-managed laboratory where students can literally go and 'make things.' The iForge houses equipment from traditional hand tools and sewing machines to state-of-the-art laser cutters and 3D printers; and the things students choose to make are as diverse as battle robots and 3D printed Christmas decorations.

We are continuing to invest with £143.8m of live capital projects due for completion by 2021. Investment is being strategically planned to develop faculty zones, allowing cognate subjects greater proximity and improving the student experience through co-location and by delivering new facilities including flexible, well-designed learning spaces. Investment in buildings underpins the world leading teaching and research facilities we provide, but it is the creative and innovate way the spaces are used that truly contributes to an outstanding student experience - and we are sharing our learning. Over 50 universities from across the world have visited the Diamond since it opened to see how we are using spaces to support novel pedagogic practice.

The University's Library, occupying 5 sites across the campus, was voted No.1 for Library Services by our students in the 2017 Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey. In the same year it hosted 3,312,282 visits; provided 3,532 student spaces; and managed a predominantly digital collection together with a print collection of 1,107,631 items. It facilitated 5,907,943 digital library visits and supported 10,540,331 digital downloads. Our unique collections and digital resources underpin the students' learning experience and library staff are active in their contribution to programme development and delivery. As part of our PLA, Library teams are supporting departments to embed activities that allow students to develop the information and digital literacy skills (as defined in the University's Information & Digital Literacy Framework) we

would expect of our students at each level of study and as Sheffield Graduates. In Q19 of the NSS, 89.5% of our students said "*The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well*' against a sector average of 86.5%.

The University's Virtual Learning Environment (My Online Learning Environment - MOLE) provides the portal through which students access course materials, collaborative online learning spaces, electronic assessments, and assessment grades and feedback. During 2017/18 there were 1,307,666 logins, giving students access to 4,362 active courses. 187,494 pieces of assessed work were submitted and over 8,000 students took online examinations via MOLE. 94% of our students said they had access to online course materials whenever they needed them, and 84% and 85% respectively said that they rely on MOLE to *do course work* and *work online with others*[12].

The University is also currently implementing its Student Lifecycle Project, a £20m programme that includes investment in a new student record system and a major overhaul of related student services and underpinning processes. These systems, which put the needs of users first, will enable the University to be even more responsive to the needs of students and staff.

As cited above, we introduced Encore lecture capture in 2017 across all of our main pool teaching spaces, providing 105 fully enabled Encore locations. This is an opt-out rather than opt-in facility and 87% of lectures in enabled rooms are being captured based on the latest statistics. In the first semester of 2017/18, 15,519 sessions were recorded, with 250,000 hours of captured sessions being viewed by students in the same period, with a spike in January around revision time. We are tracking the benefits and impacts of Encore on the students' experience and how they are using it in their studies (for example potential impacts on learning styles and attendance) as we continue to review and develop this valued resource.

Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice

As a leading research-intensive University, we are committed to producing new knowledge in our field and integrating this within the design and delivery of programmes. We understand that the relationship between teaching and research differs by subject and our PLA is realising opportunities to strengthen these relationships. Our programmes weave in research-based learning opportunities for students to engage in and support original research and to spend time in laboratories and/or in practice. For those students who want to develop their experience of novel research we offer the Sheffield Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) which provides undergraduate students with the opportunity to become directly involved in real-life research projects in subject areas that are of special interest, and to experience what it is like to work in partnership with academic staff or collaboratively in a research group. Over the past three years 365 undergraduate students have taken part in SURE projects. These take place during a six week period in the summer and ring-fenced funding is made available for WP students to participate so that no students are excluded from this opportunity for financial reasons. In 2018 we hosted the 8th annual British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR), with over 600 delegates from 68 institutions, and hosted Posters in Parliament, an annual event allowing undergraduate researchers from across the UK to present posters to MPs and dignitaries.

Anecdotally, we know that many SURE students progress to further study, and attribute their decision in part to their SURE experience. Evaluation data shows 89% of SURE 2018 participants stated that they were considering postgraduate study with 58% attributing their SURE experience to that decision, and c.60% of SURE students going onto further study in an average year. Over the last 3 years 49 of our students have been highly commended in the Global Undergraduate Awards, with a further 8 being European regional winners.

In all of our programmes we are preparing our students for life after graduation. No more so than at our Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) Training Centre. Opened in 2014, this

[12] Jisc Digital Experience Insights Survey 2017

60,000 sq ft, state-of-the-art training centre is regarded as a world-class facility, training and developing engineering apprentices with the skills and technical competencies to support the UK's Manufacturing and Engineering industries for the future. At any one time the Centre is working with 180 employers and currently has over 400 apprentices in Engineering and Business Services. Students can work from Level 2 to degree level apprenticeships. These pathways further evidence our commitment to students joining higher education from diverse backgrounds and to the way we are exposing and preparing students for the transition to work.

Personalised Learning

Every student is different and their learning experience is different as they work to their future goals. We pride ourselves on helping students on this journey, maximising opportunities and removing barriers to access, performance and progression. We understand the support we need to provide to enable students to become Sheffield Graduates, but critically our role is to enable students to manage their own learning and maximise the value they get from their time with us.

Our students: have a personal tutor; the opportunity to study abroad or spend time in employment; and access to our Languages for All programme. They benefit from our outstanding Students' Union (with over 350 student societies and a multitude of services) and have access to study skills support outside their programme; and to services to support their health and wellbeing. Essentially, our students have access to an outstanding educational experience - all of which they can use to build, own and realise their unique personal learning experience.

For those students that need, or simply want, access to extra support with their studies, we provide services via our 301 Academic Skills Centre. Available to all students in all years, 301 works alongside academic departments to provide workshops, 1:1 sessions, and online resources to help students manage their learning, develop their maths and statistics skills, and to improve their academic skills (essay and report writing, exam techniques, academic writing, listening and note taking). It also helps teach students how to undertake an original piece of research. The centre manages our SURE programme, supports student groups to develop peer assisted learning and hosts the Writing Advisory Service, run by the University's English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC). Since September 2016 there have been over 7,500 attendances at 301 Academic Skills workshops and approx. 7,000 1:1 tutorials attended from students in all faculties and at all levels of study. 301's departmental curricular interventions have benefited 12,000 students, their Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) schemes have trained over 200 students as *Leaders*, providing almost 7000 students with facilitated peer learning support on modules across the University.

We provide dedicated support for our international students to help them with their learning, such as the subject-specific Departmental Language Programmes and Writing Advisory Services, mentioned above and provided by ELTC. In parallel, our International Student Support Team and the Student Unions' Student Advice Centre (SAC) help students with issues including visa and immigration concerns, adjusting to UK life, and housing to ensure that these do not become unnecessary distractions from their studies. Notably, 34% of the students accessing support via the SAC are international.

It is also important to us that our staff have confidence in our support for student learning. We measure this regularly through the University's staff survey, and in the most recent (2016) 94% of staff stated that *"the University delivers a good quality service to students."*

3.3 Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

Employment & Further Study

Sheffield Graduates have the opportunities and support they need to succeed. We have a positive flag for highly skilled employment or further study and 95% of our students are in employment or

further study six months after graduation. We are also above benchmark for sustained employment/further study and have a positive flag for graduates achieving above median earnings against benchmark. The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guides 2019 rank Sheffield top in the north for graduate prospects and we are cited as one of 15 preferred recruiting grounds for The Times' 100 leading employers.[13]

We build towards graduation from the day students arrive in Sheffield. Our Careers Service supports students directly and at all levels. In 2017/18, they managed 6,412 student appointments, hosted 11,371 students at Careers led events, and supported 377 graduates through the e-mentoring scheme. The team is working in partnership with academic departments to deepen the offer to students and to ensure that students are able to extract, reflect and articulate the skills they are gaining as they progress through their programmes.

Each year, our careers fairs attract c.300 employers from local SMEs to world leading companies and are attended by over 4,500 students. Through the University's Employability Board and engagement with employers and professional bodies we are involving companies in the development of our programmes, and informing the skills that our students need as we prepare them for work.

> *"The Department's research and its industrial links feed strongly into its programmes, making them relevant both to students inclined to research, and those who plan to go into industry. This is reflected in their excellent employability levels."* BCS

> *"The panel was impressed with the skills coverage within the programmes. Skills have been embedded throughout the curriculum and it is clear that this has been carefully thought out. The panel was particularly pleased to note the students appreciated the skills they were obtaining and could understand their value."* Institute of Physics

We work actively with local employers because we understand the impact that graduates have on the local economy. We want to support the City so that highly skilled employment in the SCR is a choice for the 22% of our graduates who decide, or need, to stay locally in employment or further study after graduation. As a city, Sheffield has its challenges. Dominated by SMEs, with poor infrastructure and low productivity relative to other large cities, we are working collaboratively with Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Hallam University and local employers as part of the RISE project, to support the region's SMEs to recruit new graduate employees. RISE has been recognised nationally as an effective mechanism for helping to close the skills gap between areas. Evaluation of the scheme shows that for every £1 invested £10.53 is generated (net GVA). The total net GVA expected to be generated post internship for RISE cohorts between 2017 and 2019 is £7.7million.

The University works closely with employers to help ensure students are abreast of the changing needs of the workplace. The MindSphere Lounge, situated in the Diamond building, and in collaboration with Siemens and the SCR is working to accelerate digitalisation, boost digital skills, and promote technology and knowledge exchange to meet the needs of an increasingly digitalised industry. This physical working space demonstrates real examples of digital solutions as well as providing a venue for public presentations, research workshops, seminars, teaching, and meetings. It also provides access to MindSphere, Siemens' Internet of Things (IoT) operating system and data analytics services, with support from two Siemens engineers on site.

We have recently reviewed our support for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. We have embedded enterprise more centrally within our learning and teaching support for curriculum development and merged the services supporting staff and student entrepreneurship to maximise the experience for students and their access to employers, researchers and external business support.

[13] Annual High Fliers UK Graduate Careers Survey, 2018

Employability & Transferable Skills

Our outstanding student outcomes are underpinned by the skills and attributes students develop during their time at the University. They are further supported by the third arm of our Learning and Teaching Strategy, an *Outward Facing Ethos,* which recognises our responsibilities as an institution to the wider public and focuses on the ways in which our activities can positively affect society. We promote engaged learning, giving students opportunities to work on issues of public concern in local, national and international contexts and we are working with our Students' Union to build the principles of sustainability into our curriculum.

Employability is inherent within our programmes and development of our SGAs makes our graduates intrinsically employable. Our holistic approach allows learning activities and assessment to be designed in such a way as to develop, promote and assess outcomes in a coherent manner throughout the whole programme. An outward facing curriculum enables us to engage employers in curriculum design and students to forge connections with external partners, build occupational awareness, and connect their degree programmes with the world beyond the University.

We are weaving work experience into our programmes using work oriented learning, employer-led projects, employer-funded scholarships, placements, degree level apprenticeships and years in industry. We have seen a fourfold increase in students taking a year in industry since 2011 and are developing our offer to meet a growing demand for provision with employment experience.

We also recognise that for many students work and study go hand in hand and we operate a Student Jobshop (part of the Careers Service and based within our Students' Union) to help students find part-time paid work, summer internships, placements, vacation and voluntary work. The Jobshop team is responsible for processing all the vacancies we advertise to our students. In 2017/18 this included 10,472 vacancies, of which 1,444 were part-time opportunities (excluding internal opportunities). The team also hosts a Part-time and Volunteering Fair (this year 2,061 students attended) and operate an internal agency (myJobshop) that manages the recruitment of students to part-time and casual work within the University. Since January 2018, myJobshop has supported recruitment to 2,834 different on campus roles, covering everything from paid volunteers for Open Days to working in a departmental office. 13,540 work placements have been made from the vacancies advertised, 98,286 hours of work delivered, and over £1.3m paid to student workers.

The University has recently made it a requirement that all student employment on campus is managed via myJobshop. This not only allows us to track students' eligibility to work, but to work with them to make sure that their engagement with myJobshop involves a level of reflection that will help prepare them for the application/interview processes they will meet when they begin their search for graduate opportunities. Our Students' Union also help students to recognise the skills they are acquiring and last year 1,583 students were supported via the Society and Committee Leadership Training Programme.

We know from research undertaken by our Widening Participation Research & Evaluation Unit (WPREU) that our financial support for students from lower-income households enables recipients to chose term-time work on the basis of potential employability experience and development opportunities; rather than having to take off-campus work which can sometimes offer little value beyond pay. The research suggests that on-campus employment also offers students greater flexibility, and is less disruptive to their studies.

Our On-Campus placements scheme has been running for six years and allows University departments to submit proposals to host students on placements of up to 100 hours, to work on either an existing piece of work or a new project. Over the last three years we have invested £226,000 in 228 placements via this scheme. Placements must demonstrate how they directly support priorities within the University's Strategic Plan and/or the Learning & Teaching Strategy.

Whether On Campus or Off Campus we celebrate student placements and two of our students won the 2017 national Off Campus Commercial Impact Award (run by the National Association of Student Employment Services, NASES) for their part-time work with a Sheffield based SME.

Our alumni are critical partners in supporting the ways in which we ensure graduate employability. An excellent example of this in practice is the City Connections programme, targeted at WP students and run in partnerships with the Alumni Team and the faculties of Social Sciences and Arts & Humanities. The scheme helps students forge connections with external partners, build their occupational awareness and connect their degree programme with the world beyond the University. Over the past three years 210 students have been supported to prepare for and visit companies in London and then attend an evening event with alumni in senior positions within the city. Off the back of this we are now also running a parallel event with alumni and businesses in the North. The programme was nominated for a THE Award for 'Outstanding Support for Students' in 2016 and statistics from the 2017/18 evaluation report showed that 96% of students felt more confident about their career prospects after graduation following City Connections.

> "*City Connections was an amazing experience that not only motivated me, but gave me new hope and confidence, because sometimes it isn't a lack of capability but a lack of opportunity that holds you back.*" Nellie Wanyama, Law Student (secured a training contract with DLA Piper following City Connections).*"*

> *"This is a great opportunity to help level the playing field for those students who might otherwise be at a disadvantage. Northern City Connections is a rewarding experience to participate in, and I highly recommend it."* Alison Lally (Philosophy, 1989), Head of People and Communication, Department for Work and Pensions

We are also supporting students to develop their skills in a global context. For example Global Learning Opportunities in the Social Sciences (GLOSS) enables students to engage in student-run social enterprises related to international development; to gain international research experience with academic staff; and to attend major international summits taking place during the academic year. Accompanied by academic staff, the last gives groups of students the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of international policy debates at the highest level, to attend press conferences and produce outputs visible to an international audience enhancing their research skills and employability.

> *"I have studied in two different universities, in two different countries. I have met lawyers from all over the world, and when they found out I was going to the G7 Summit, people went crazy and started messaging me saying, 'How on earth have you got this opportunity?' They were completely flabbergasted that it was available, and I said, 'Well you can do it at the University of Sheffield'."* G7 Student Policy Analyst, Global Leadership Initiative

Positive Outcomes for all

Recruitment of students from Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) backgrounds and BME students has increased over the last five years. HESA data show that we recruit 8.9% of our new entrants from LPN backgrounds compared with a Russell Group average of 6.0%. We are committed to supporting students from LPN backgrounds, mature students and other under-represented groups to realise their full potential. Established in 2012, WPREU is making a major contribution not just locally, but nationally to inform the sector's understanding of the interventions that have the greatest impact, and our support is evolving in line with research. With a double positive flag for continuation among National IMD Q3, 4 and 5 students we know our approach is making a difference.

Continuation metrics for our Polar and IMO Q3, Q4 and Q5 and mature students all achieve positive or double positive flags. Highly skilled employment or further study achieves positive or double positive flags for mature, BME and disabled students (with these students outperforming

benchmarks compared to young students, white students and students without disabilities). So we know we are going in the right direction, but we also know there is more to be done.

The University's DLL provides a route to higher education for mature students who, for a variety of reasons, have chosen to pursue their studies later in life. Our full-time degrees with integrated foundation years provide a supportive entry to undergraduate studies for students without traditional entry qualifications. With a cohort size that has grown from 82 in 2015 to 142 in 2017, we have seen pass rates improve from 70.6% to 83.5% over the same period and the number of students choosing to progress to undergraduate study with us increase from 43.9% to 60.6%.

We have targeted support to meet the needs of mature students, recognising that mature students often have diverse motivations for study such as training for a new career, retiring and fulfilling a lifetime ambition, or returning to education after raising their family, and we adapt support accordingly. This includes nursery services, financial advice, kids camps; and mature students are represented through the Mature Student Committee and a dedicated Students' Union Councillor. Mature students achieve above benchmark on all split metrics, with positive and double positive flags for continuation and highly skilled employment or further study respectively.

Whilst BME students are also above benchmark on all splits, and achieve a double positive flag for highly skilled employment or further study, there are attainment gaps that we want to close and the University has this year developed a new BAME strategy that sets robust targets and specific interventions to achieve this.

4. Conclusion

Beneath the Crown of Success, the University's Coat of Arms contains a gold-edged open book on which is inscribed *Disce Doce* (Learn and Teach) and the motto of Firth College[14], *Rerum Cognoscere Causas* (To Discover the Causes of Things; from Virgil's Georgics II, 490). Both statements remain as relevant to what we do today as they did over 100 years ago. Funded by the people of the City, we have stayed true to our roots and our civic and inclusive values as we have grown to become a truly global organisation.

This submission and our TEF indicators evidence how the University of Sheffield is delivering outstanding student outcomes, driven by the quality of our teaching and a rich student experience; enabling all our students to become the successful and engaged Sheffield Graduates they aspire to be.

[14] Firth College was one of three early institutions from which the University of Sheffield originated